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ABSTRACT

North York defines Special Needs Schools as those in communities characterized by a higher than average percentage of: children under 15 years of age, one parent families, women in the labor force, people whose mother tongue is not English, multiple family housing, or family mobility. In 1983, the Special Needs Evaluation Subcommittee collected information from parents regarding their perceptions of the 14 Priority I schools, the program offered to their children, and the relationship between the school and the community. Results were also compared with those of a similar 1980 survey. Parents now view their child's program far more favorably than they did in 1980. Parents were also more positive about their child's development of cultural and social values. They felt that the school is helping their child to appreciate the many cultures of Canadian people and to respect the rights of others. Parents felt that the school cooperates well with the neighborhood and that it allows parents sufficient input in decisions affecting their children. Most parents whose children had been attending the school for two or more years indicated that the school had improved since 1980. (BW)

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NORTH YORK BOARD OF EDUCATION

RESEARCH REPORT

ED250339

PARENTS IN SPECIAL NEEDS SCHOOLS:

PERCEPTIONS OF THEIR SCHOOL & COMMUNITY

Special Needs Evaluation Sub-Committee

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TM 840 612

January, 1984

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INTRODUCTION

Background

In April, 1981 the Board approved a report establishing Special Needs Schools, i.e. schools in communities characterized by a higher than average percentage of:

- children under 15 years of age
- one parent families, separated and divorced household heads
- women in the labour force
- people whose mother tongue is not English
- multiple family housing
- family mobility

In a needs assessment survey conducted for the Board in 1980 by Dr. Anne Keeton of the Ontario Institute for Studies in Education, educators in "high need" schools reported that their students:

- had special learning needs (25 - 50% greater than provincial averages)
- were below expected levels of academic achievement (1.5 - 2.5 grades behind in mathematics and reading)
- lacked confidence in themselves as learners
- had more serious social and emotional problems than other children

The Special Needs Evaluation Sub-Committee, established in 1981, has undertaken a long term plan for measuring the effects of the project on students, teachers, and parents in the fourteen Priority I Schools with Special Needs. Under this plan, one group is surveyed each year. This year, Year III of the project, the Sub-Committee collected information from parents regarding their perceptions of their school, the program offered to their children and the relationship between the school and the community. This report outlines the results of that data collection.

Purpose of the Survey

The purpose of collecting information from parents was (i) to determine their current perceptions of the schools, and (ii) to determine whether there had been any change in perceptions since the study carried out by Keeton in 1980.

METHOD

Development of the Parent Questionnaire

The questionnaire used in the present study was based on the one used by Dr. Keeton in the 1980 needs assessment survey. The Special Needs Evaluation Sub-Committee met several times to consider the selection of those items which they felt would be most appropriate and to make

minor re-wording changes so that all items could be rated on the same scale. The final draft of the questionnaire included twenty-eight items organized in the following three sections:

- Your child's program in school
- Your child's development of cultural and social values
- The role of the school in your community

In addition to the above items, the final page of the questionnaire included another nine items to be answered only by parents whose children had been attending the school for two years or more. These additional items asked parents for their perception of whether the school had changed during the past two years.

Sample

The sample for this study included all parents of children in grades two and five in the fourteen schools designated as Priority I Special Needs Schools - a total of 1,525 parents.

Procedure for Collecting Data

The questionnaire was distributed to parents by classroom teachers following the teacher-parent interviews held by each school in late November or early December. Attached to the questionnaire was a letter from the Director of Education explaining the purpose of the questionnaire and requesting the parents' co-operation. Parents who spoke Spanish, Italian, Greek or Gujarati were given the names of people they could contact if they required assistance in completing the questionnaire. Also attached to the questionnaire was a return envelope marked "Confidential". Parents were asked to return their questionnaire to the school in the sealed envelope by the date indicated. The school then forwarded these envelopes to Educational Research & Evaluation Services. If a parent did not attend a teacher-parent interview, the package of materials was sent home with the report card.

RESULTS

Questionnaires were returned by 47% of the parents. Of those returned, 53% were from parents of grade 2 children and 44% were from parents of grade 5 children.

Initially, the questionnaires were analyzed in four groups: parents in each of grades 2 and 5 whose children had been in the school less than two years and parents in each of grades 2 and 5 whose children had been in the school for more than two years. However, since the pattern of responses was very similar for the four groups, the results are reported for the total group of parents who responded. They are presented in the following subsections:

- Description of the Respondents
- Perceptions of Child's Program in School

- Perceptions of Child's Development of Cultural and Social Values
- Perceptions of the Role of the School in the Community
- Perceptions of Changes in the School

Description of the Respondents, 1983

Parents were asked to provide information about:

- the length of time their child had attended the school
- previous school attended
- age when child first attended school in Canada
- whether or not the child attends a special education or English as a Second Language program
- languages spoken in the home

The following tables summarize the information provided regarding the length of time the children had attended their current school and the schools attended previously.

LENGTH OF TIME CHILD AT CURRENT SCHOOL

	Less than 1 year %	1-2 years %	More than 2 years %
Grade 2	19	18	62
Grade 5	17	10	73

PREVIOUS SCHOOL

	Same School %	Another Special Needs School %	Another North York School %	School Outside North York %	School Outside Canada %
Grade 2	51	8	10	27	4
Grade 5	33	8	11	37	10

Seventy-three percent of the parents report that their child began school in Canada when he/she was four or five years old; seven percent of parents said their child began school at three years and twelve percent of parents mention ages from six to eleven. The remaining parents did not answer this question.

Eighty-nine percent of the parents say their child does not attend a special education program and 85% say their child is not enrolled in an English as a Second Language program.

Sixty percent of the parents who returned a questionnaire report that English is the only language spoken in their home, while 22% list English plus another language and 18% list a language other than English. The following table presents the languages and combinations of languages mentioned by parents.

LANGUAGES SPOKEN IN THE HOME

Language	# of times mentioned	Language	# of times mentioned
African	1	Polish	3
Akan	2	Portuguese	4
Arabic	8	Punjabi	12
Armenian	4	Russian	2
Bengali	1	Serbo-Croatian	2
Chinese	25	Sinhalese	3
Farsi	1	Spanish	23
Greek	48	Swedish	1
Gujarati	29	Turkish	9
Hindi	12	Urdu	13
Hungarian	1	Vietnamese	7
Italian	14	Yugoslavian	3
Iranian		Gujarati/Katchi	1
Japanese	1	Hindi/Punjabi	2
Katchi	5	Hindi/Punjabi/Urdu	1
Korean	10	Urdu/Punjabi	1
Laotian	3	Sindhi/Urdu	1
Macedonian	1	Laos/Chinese	3
Marathi	1	Romanian/Macedonian/Greek	1
Patois or West Indian Creole	1	Greek/French	1
Phokien	1	Greek/Armenian	1
Persian	1	Polish/Arabic	1
Philipino (Tagalog)	4	Hungarian/Romanian	1
		Italian/Spanish/ Hebrew/French	2

The four groups for which Greek, Italian, Spanish and Gujarati speaking contact people were made available were represented among our respondents in the same proportion as in the population of parents who received a questionnaire.

	Greek %	Spanish %	Gujarati %	Italian %	English %
Percent of Grade 2 and Grade 5 Parents in Special Needs Schools who speak:	6	4	3	1.5	77
Percent of Respondents who speak:	7	3	4	2	60

Perceptions of Child's Program in School

Parents were asked to respond to ten questions related to their child's program in school, for example:

- child's general progress in school and perceptions of him/herself as a learner
- child's progress in specific areas such as reading, mathematics, environmental studies, music, art, physical education
- school's system for reporting child's progress and for placing children in the grades
- extent to which the school (i) helps the child to develop special talents and skills and (ii) provides encouragement and support for the child to learn
- extent to which parent feels comfortable contacting the teacher or principal

Table 1 provides a list of the specific questions and the percentage of parents in both 1983 and 1980 who gave positive, neutral or negative ratings to each item.

Approximately 79% of the parents in both surveys reported that their child is doing well in school. In 1983, however, parents are far more positive than they were in 1980 about what the schools are doing to help their child learn specific skills. Eighty percent or more of the parents report that their school is doing a good job in helping their child to learn skills in spoken English, reading, writing, mathematics, environmental studies, music and arts and physical education. These results are in sharp contrast to the findings from the 1980 survey when far fewer parents (40-73%) gave positive ratings to the development of skill in each of these areas. Furthermore, 64% of the parents now feel that the school is helping their child to develop special skills and talents as compared with 49% of the parents in 1980.

Although there is little change from 1980 to 1983 in the percentage of parents who report that their child feels good about him/herself as a learner (81% vs 78%), parents are now more positive about the support and encouragement provided by the school in helping their child to learn and do well (82% vs 73%). Parents still feel strongly that their child should be given homework (76% vs 72%).

TABLE 1

Your child's program in school

	PARENTS - 1983				PARENTS - 1980			
	"Yes" %	Sometimes %	"No" %	Don't know/no response %	"Yes" %	Sometimes %	"No" %	Don't know/no response %
1. Do you think your child is doing well at school right now?	79	15	4	2	78	13	9	1
2. Is the school helping to develop your child's skills in spoken English?	86	6	3	5	73	14	8	6
3. Is the school doing a good job in helping your child to learn:								
- reading skills?	89	5	4	2	67	14	13	7
- writing skills?	88	6	3	3	65	14	12	9
- mathematics?	87	5	4	4	61	15	9	16
- environmental studies?	80	6	3	11	40	13	9	38
- music and arts?	78	9	4	9	62	16	9	13
- physical education?	82	7	3	8	73	11	8	9
4. Do you feel comfortable about getting in touch with the teacher or principal of the school when you feel you need to?	92	4	3	1	73	10	15	2
5. Is the school helping your child develop his/her special skills and talents?	64	11	7	18	49	21	21	9
6. Should your child be given homework?	76	19	3	2	72	10	11	8
7. Is the school providing your child with encouragement and support to learn and do well?	82	7	2	9	73	14	12	1
8. a) Do you understand the system used to report your child's progress in school?	81	5	6	8	81	8	8	2
b) Do you approve of that system?	72	8	8	12	62	13	21	4
9. a) Do you understand the way children are placed and moved through the grades in your child's school?	65	6	18	11	74	11	9	5
b) Do you approve of that system?	60	7	9	24	55	22	15	7
10. Does your child feel good about him/herself as a learner?	78	13	2	7	81	9	8	2

* In the 1980 study, the rating scales were different for each item. For example, the rating scale for item 2 was "much help ... not at all"; for item 4 it was "very uncomfortable ... very comfortable". Since each of these rating scales was essentially a five point scale asking for a response from very positive to very negative, the 1980 data are reported in that way to facilitate comparisons with the 1983 data.

Approximately 80% of the parents in both 1980 and 1983 reported that they understand the system used to report their child's progress in school. In 1980, 62% of the parents approved of the system, while in 1983 72% of parents approve of the system.

Fewer parents in 1983 than in 1980 (65% vs 74%) report that they understand the way children are placed and moved through the grades, although more parents in 1983 than in 1980 report that they approve of the system (60% vs 55%).

Almost all parents indicate that they feel comfortable getting in touch with the teacher or principal of the school when the need arises. This represents a significant increase from 1980, when only 73% expressed such an opinion.

In summary, parents now view their child's program in school far more positively than they did three years ago.

Perceptions of Child's Development of Cultural & Social Values

There were nine items in the questionnaire which asked parents about various aspects of the development of their child's cultural and social values. The responses to these questions from parents in both 1983 and 1980 are presented in Table 2.

One result that is immediately obvious from an examination of Table 2 is that in this year's survey a substantial percentage of parents indicate that they do not know the answer to all of the questions. For example, almost half of the parents do not know whether the school has too few teachers from different cultural backgrounds or whether or not teachers appreciate the cultural backgrounds of their children. Among those parents who did venture a response, however, slightly more feel that the school does not have too few teachers from different cultural backgrounds. The percentage of respondents expressing such an opinion increased significantly from 1980 to 1983, from 10% to 28%. The overwhelming majority of parents who answered the question regarding whether or not teachers appreciate the cultural backgrounds of their children did so affirmatively.

Seventy-one percent of parents in 1983 feel that the school is helping their child to appreciate the many cultures of Canadian people as compared with 57% of parents in 1980. Few parents feel that their child is made to feel uncomfortable or different about their background either by other children or by members of staff. While fewer parents answered "no" to this question in 1983 than in 1980, it appears that this is largely due to the fact that more parents in 1983 than in 1980 gave a "don't know" response.

Approximately the same percentage of parents in 1983 as in 1980 agree that

- their child is encouraged at school to think of the feelings of others (73%)
- their child is encouraged to say what he/she thinks and feels (65%)

TABLE 2

Your child's development of cultural and social values

		PARENTS - 1983				PARENTS - 1980			
		"Yes" %	Sometimes %	"No" %	Don't know/no response %	"Yes" %	Sometimes %	"No" %	Don't know/no response %
11.	Is the school helping your child to appreciate the many cultures of Canadian people?	71	8	2	19	57	21	13	9
12.	In school, is your child being made to feel uncomfortable or "different" about his/her background:								
	a) by other children?	9	10	66	15	10	9	77	6
	b) by any members of staff?	6	2	74	18	5	6	81	8
13.	Does the school have too few teachers from different cultural backgrounds?	21	2	28	49	29	47	10	15
14.	Do teachers appreciate the cultural and language backgrounds of their children?	44	6	3	47	49	26	14	12
15.	Is your child encouraged at school to think of the feelings of others?	73	6	2	19	72	14	10	4
16.	Is your child encouraged to say what he/she thinks and feels?	65	11	4	20	65	17	12	6
17.	Is the school helping your child to respect the rights of other people?	78	6	1	15	69	16	11	4
18.	Is the school helping your child to be sensitive to other children with special problems and handicaps?	65	5	3	27	60	20	12	9
19.	Do the values which your child learns in school conflict with the ones you teach at home?	17	16	58	9	18	13	66	3

More parents in 1983 than in 1980 feel that the school is helping their child to respect the rights of others (78% vs 69%) and to be sensitive to children with special problems and handicaps (65% vs 60%).

Finally, 58% of parents feel that the values their child learns in school do not conflict with those taught at home. While this percentage is slightly less than in the 1980 survey, again the difference seems to be attributable to the fact that more parents indicate they don't know the answer to this question.

Perceptions of the Role of the School in the Community

The final section of the questionnaire included nine questions about the role of the school in the community. The responses to these questions are summarized in Table 3. In general, while there is a substantial percentage of parents in 1983 who give "don't know" responses to these items, those parents who did respond tend to be more positive about relationships between the school and the community than were parents in 1980.

Seventy-four percent of parents in 1983 feel that their child's school co-operates well with the neighbourhood as compared with 69% of parents in 1980. Sixty percent of parents in 1983, compared with 37% in 1980, report that the school does provide help in getting the assistance of other agencies such as social services, dentists or doctors. Sixty-nine percent of parents indicate that their school is active in supporting programs for children at various times outside of school hours, such as evenings, weekends, and on professional development days. This represents a significant change from the 1980 survey when 39% of parents replied affirmatively to this question. Also, more parents are now happier with the lunch program than was the case in 1980 (67% vs 42%).

In addition to the services already offered, 65% of parents feel that the schools should offer services for pre-schoolers, single and/or working parents. Forty-six percent of parents indicate that the school should listen more to what people in the neighbourhood have to say.

With regard to choosing class placements or special education programs for their child, more parents in 1983 than in 1980 feel they have sufficient input regarding these decisions, and fewer parents indicate that they do not have enough say. Approximately one-third of the parents in 1983, however, indicate that they don't know if they have sufficient opportunities for participating in decisions about their child's class placement.

Two areas in which more than 40% of the parents feel they do not have sufficient information to give a rating relate to whether or not the school system acts responsibly with taxpayers' money and whether or not school facilities could be used to a greater extent by people in the neighbourhood. However, among those who could respond

TABLE 3

The role of the school in your community

	PARENTS - 1983				PARENTS - 1980			
	"Yes" %	Sometimes %	"No" %	Don't know/no response %	"Yes" %	Sometimes %	"No" %	Don't know/no response %
20. Is your child's school co-operating well with your neighbourhood?	74	3	1	22	69	17	6	7
21. Could people in the neighbourhood use the school's facilities more?	38	11	6	45	48	21	22	9
22. Should the staff of the school listen more to what parents in this neighbourhood have to say?	46	21	6	27	37	23	31	9
23. Do parents have enough say in choosing:								
a) class placements and teachers for their children	29	7	30	34	21	23	47	10
b) special education and other special programs for their children?	36	8	21	35	27	26	31	16
24. Does the school help you in getting the assistance of other agencies (e.g. dentists, doctors, social services, etc.)?	60	7	10	23	37	8	48	18
25. Does the school system act responsibly with taxpayers' money?	46	8	6	40	46	26	19	9
26. Should the schools offer services for pre-schoolers, single and/or working parents?	65	5	8	22	58	14	19	9
27. Is your school active in supporting programs for children before and after school, evenings, weekends and professional development days?	69	11	6	14	39	18	35	9
28. Are you happy with the lunch time program at the school?	67	5	8	20	42	13	18	26

- the majority do feel the school system acts responsibly - a much more positive response than in 1980.

- the majority also feel that the school's facilities could be used more extensively

Although, in general, parents are positive about the role of the school in their community, there is a substantial group of parents who lack information about some of the services available.

Perception of Changes in the School

Parents of children who had been attending the school for two years or more were asked to complete an additional ten items regarding the extent of improvement in various aspects of the school's operation during the past two years. Two-thirds of the parents who returned a questionnaire had children who had attended the school for two years or more and were thus able to respond; their responses are presented in Table 4.

TABLE 4

Changes in the School

	Much Improved %	Improved %	No change %	Worse %	Much worse %	Don't know %
Teaching: - reading?	23	37	22	2	-	16
- writing?	21	38	22	1	-	18
- mathematics?	22	36	22	2	-	18
Supervision on P.A. days	18	29	15	-	-	38
Programs for New Canadians	10	21	5	-	-	64
Class size	11	23	28	4	2	32
Communication with parents	21	39	27	1	-	12
Before-and-after school programs	15	32	18	2	-	33
Your child(ren)'s attitudes toward school	26	36	25	2	-	11
Discipline in the school	18	31	25	3	1	22

As is evident from the table, almost 60% of the parents report that there have been improvements in the following areas:

- the teaching of reading, writing and mathematics
- children's attitudes toward school
- communicating with parents

Although for each of the remaining areas at least one-third of the parents report not having sufficient information to make a rating, the majority of those who could respond feel there have been improvements.

Overall, 69% of the parents feel that their child's school has improved during the last two years.

Space was provided for parents to elaborate on the ways in which they feel their school has improved during the last two years and the majority chose to do so. Their comments focussed on the following eight topics:

- School in General
- Principals & Teachers
- School Program/Activities
- Changes in the child
- Services provided by the School
- Class size
- School Facilities
- Special Programs for Children

The main ideas expressed in each of these areas are briefly summarized in the following sections:

School in General

Comment	Number of times mentioned
The school has improved all round. It is put to full use.	21
I am pleased with the school. My feelings about the school are positive. I have not experienced any problems.	12
I don't know if my child's school has improved.	10
My child's school has not improved. I am not pleased with the school.	10
Some things have improved and other things haven't.	1

Principals and Teachers

The teachers communicate frequently with parents and are very supportive and interested in parents' views.	43
The teachers seem to be more concerned. They have a better attitude. The children are getting more attention.	30
I am pleased with the teachers. They have improved.	28
The teachers are disciplining the students more.	26

	Number of times mentioned
The principal (vice-principal) is always available. He communicates frequently with parents and takes an interest in the students. He does a good job.	11
The children need to be disciplined more. They do not behave in a well mannered way.	7
Teachers should tell parents where their child is experiencing difficulty and ask them to assist their children in learning.	3
Teachers should be more aware of a child's work habits and assist a child that has difficulties.	2
One teacher should not have to look after two grades. It is wrong to mix grades.	2
The principal is difficult to reach. I am not pleased with him.	1
Teachers need to be aware of changes in society and in teaching methods.	1
<u>School Program/Activities</u>	
The school program is more varied and educational. My child is learning about a wide variety of things. For example, music, drama, dancing, sports, different cultures, reading, writing and math.	35
Reading, writing and math are all taught better. The school program has improved.	8
The students frequently go on field trips now.	8
More homework is needed. My child responds much better when he knows something is expected of him.	7
Too much time is spent on non-academic subjects (art, music, gym, etc.) instead of on reading, writing and math.	6
Teachers need to use traditional learning methods to ensure that students have a firm grasp of the basics. For example, learning to read with phonics, memorization of multiplication tables.	4
The program needs to be upgraded in some way to ensure that students are learning what they are supposed to be learning.	4

	Number of times mentioned
The method of reporting could be improved. I would like to know what level my child is at. I would like my child to get a grade.	1
Having parents pick up report cards is a good idea. The teacher can explain the grading and comments.	1
Children should be able to bring their books home to their parents so that they can review them together.	1

Changes in the Child

My child has gained more confidence in him/herself and enjoys going to school. His/her attitude towards learning has improved.	33
My child's grasp of reading, math, etc., has improved. My child has made great progress.	31
My child gets along with other children better. There are fewer confrontations among students. He/she is well mannered.	9
My child's outlook on life has changed. He/she learned new values/matured.	2
My child's performance has improved due to our encouragement at home. We go over his/her homework.	1

Services Provided by the School

Before and After School Programs

The school offers before/after school programs for the children. They are great.	19
There are many programs for single parents, mothers and tots before and after school. Sports programs are also offered during the week. The school is much more community oriented. It is now a place that is no longer intimidating to the parents.	15
The school needs before/after school programs	3

	Number of times mentioned
Lunch Program	
The lunch program is excellent.	24
There is not enough time for the children to eat lunch.	1
There is a need for a hot lunch program.	1
Expanding the lunch program to include going to the Resource Centre as it gives the children interesting and fun things to do other than standing in the school yard.	1
During lunch more supervision should be provided so that more working parents can leave children in school for the lunch program.	1
Recess	
There needs to be more supervision during recess.	4
There is more supervision during recess.	1
Children should be allowed to stay indoors during recess in the winter when it is cold.	1
Professional development programs are very good.	17
The Home and School Association/School-Community Association is very good.	4
The school has a program for calling parents if a child does not reach school/or if there is an emergency.	3
The school helps when a child has physical or emotional problems/the school deals with problems better.	1
Newsletters to parents are very informative/helpful.	1
Class Size	
Class size is too big. Teachers have no time to look after all the kids. How can they give homework and check it? There should be more teachers.	6
Classes are smaller. There are more teachers.	5

	Number of times mentioned
School Facilities	
Facilities have improved for extra-curricular activities; phys-ed facilities have improved.	10
There is more classroom space with the addition.	10
The playground is good/has improved.	7
The library has improved.	5
The school has improved in its physical appearance. It is much cleaner and brighter. They have put a lot of work into it.	3
Special Programs for Children	
Heritage Languages	
The heritage language program is important. We as ethnic parents appreciate it.	5
Language classes should be taught during the day, not after school. The children are tired and restless by that point.	1
The heritage language program should not have been stopped. It helped children appreciate their "family" language.	1
The board should by more sympathetic to our ethnic groups needs.	1
The school has more special programs and equipment. The computers are helping our children become aware of todays technology.	9
The school helps children from a different cultural background feel a sense of security and acceptance within the school environment (and respect for children of different cultures).	7
Special Education classes are good.	6
E.S.L. programs are good.	2

SUMMARY

The purpose of this study was to gather information from the parents of children attending Priority I Schools with Special Needs concerning their perceptions of the schools and to compare the results with those obtained from a similar survey carried out in 1980. The study focussed on three main issues: the child's program in school, the development of his/her cultural and social values, and the role of the school in the community. An additional section was included for those parents whose child had attended the school for two years or more in order to determine whether or not they perceived the school as having changed.

Results from the survey show that parents now view their child's program in school far more favourably than they did three years ago. They are more positive than they were in 1980 regarding what the schools are doing to help their child learn specific skills (i.e. spoken English, reading, writing, mathematics, environmental studies, music and arts, physical education and special skills and talents) and the support and encouragement the schools provide in helping their child to learn and do well. They now feel more comfortable contacting teachers or the principal when the need arises.

While a considerable number of the parents felt that they lacked sufficient knowledge to respond to many of the questions concerning their child's development of cultural and social values, those who did expressed more positive reactions than was the case in 1980. A larger percentage felt that the school does not have too few teachers from different cultural and linguistic backgrounds of their children and that the school is helping their child to appreciate the many cultures of Canadian people and to respect the rights of others.

Responses regarding the relationship between the school and the community were also more favourable in 1983 than in 1980. More parents now feel that the school co-operates well with the neighbourhood, that it provides help in obtaining the assistance of other agencies, that it is active in supporting programs for children at various times outside of school hours and that it allows parents sufficient input in decisions affecting their children. There is, however, a substantial group of parents who lack information about some of the services available.

The majority of parents whose children had been attending the school for two years or more indicated that the various aspects of the school's operations had improved over the past two years. Almost 60% reported that there had been improvements in the teaching of reading, writing and mathematics, the children's attitudes towards school and communicating with parents. Although for the remaining areas at least one-third of the parents reported not having sufficient information to respond to the questions, the majority of those who did felt that there had been improvements.